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ABSTRACT

The Connecticut inter-district middle school curriculum implementation project of the Capitol Region Humanities Alliance (CRHA) is presented in this summative evaluation. The main purposes of the 1996-97 project initiative were: (1) to implement the social studies curriculum partnering activities between Hartford public middle schools and the area's suburban public middle schools; and (2) to increase students' achievement in social studies knowledge and skills and build their appreciation of studying history from a multi-cultural perspective. In general, the project realized success with the pursuit of its goals. The project's core ideas and curriculum materials were important and well-suited to state goals regarding the restructuring of middle school social studies education. Essential elements of the project expanded and deepened inter-community communication and partnerships by building strong ties between Hartford and its surrounding community. However some school administrators and teachers complained of little relationship between the project and their social studies curriculum, some materials were age inappropriate, and objectives were not sufficiently grounded in the state frameworks. The CRHA management and leadership were also criticized. It is recommended that the project continue, but it should adopt a more effective design for implementation and curriculum development. (MM)

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ED 431 640

Capitol Region Humanities Alliance Inter-District Grant
"We're Making History"

Summative Evaluation

June 1997

Charles
Bruckerhoff

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Abstract

This is a summative evaluation of "We're Making History," an inter-district middle school curriculum implementation project of the Capitol Region Humanities Alliance (CRHA) that was funded in 1996-97 with a grant totaling $120,000 by the Connecticut State Department of Education. Prior to receiving this grant, the CRHA had obtained substantial funds from various national and local philanthropies for curriculum development and teacher training of a Hartford-based hands-on, multi-cultural social studies project.

The main purposes of this 1996-97 initiative were: (1) to implement the social studies curriculum in partnering activities between Hartford public middle schools and the area's suburban public middle schools and (2) to increase students' achievement in social studies knowledge and skills and build their appreciation of studying history from a multi-cultural perspective. The project included collaboration among teachers for development of curriculum and assessment instruments and partnering visits by students and their teachers to each others' schools and to museums and field study sites in the greater Hartford area.

In general, the project realized success with the pursuit of its goals. Participants spoke of the great need for more high quality interaction on educational bases between Hartford's public school children and children from the surrounding suburban public school districts. Teachers, parents, students, and school administrators recognized that the core idea of this project is well suited to the region's social and educational needs. The opportunity to bring the children and their teachers together in the different educational environments was valued by all participants. Also, teachers noted that the curriculum materials, namely, primary sources from different cultural groups of the past and present, added a significant, positive change to their regular social studies curriculum.

However, the CRHA project developed some problems during its inter-district implementation of "We're Making History." Some school

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superintendents and building principals preferred not to disrupt their district's curriculum with a project that they perceived to have little relationship with their social studies curriculum, was not sufficiently grounded in the State's frameworks and national trends for social studies education, and they disapproved of the CRHA's management style and leadership. Teachers expressed similar views about the initiative, and added that the professional development aspect was lacking in the expertise that experienced public middle school teachers would provide, curriculum materials were age-inappropriate and unfriendly to teachers, and the project's meetings were hectic.

The project's core ideas and curriculum materials are seen by participants as important and well-suited to the general interest in restructuring middle school social studies education in Connecticut's public schools. These essential elements would not only improve the school curriculum by expanding and deepening its coverage, but also by building strong ties between the citizens of Hartford and its surrounding suburbs to produce a more harmonious, well-educated community and a more robust, productive economy. The project should continue, but it should adopt a more effective design for implementation and curriculum development. Recommendations for improvement are included.

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Introduction

In 1996, the Connecticut Humanities Council (CHC) received a grant of $80,000 from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) to help students in the capitol region to study multi-cultural curricula consistent with "current scholarship" in the United States and world history, and to build historical inquiry skills through "hands-on" history experiences in urban and suburban classrooms and cultural institutions. Subsequent to the above award, the project also received a $40,000 supplemental funding grant from the CSDE to add 100 more students, implement a technology component, and increase parent's participation. The program director was Ms. Jane Christie. The participating school districts were: East Hartford, Farmington, Hartford, New Hartford, Rocky Hill, and Windsor.

The project's original, targeted audience was 600 middle school students (half from the city of Hartford and half from Hartford's suburbs). The supplemental funding would increase student participants to 700 total. A key provision of this project was to provide opportunities for youngsters, who come from different social and economic circumstances, to come together for collaborative work periodically during the school year and to reflect together on their work. A second and equally important aspect of this project was to provide opportunities to the students' teachers for their development of curriculum and assessment strategies that are keyed to the project's objectives. The selected teachers would be veterans of the three-week, multi-cultural social studies institutes that had been offered in previous years by the Capitol Region Humanities Alliance (CRHA), a subsidiary of the CHC.[1]

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[1]Two issues in this project are teachers' ownership of the original idea and their diminished role in subsequent development of the curriculum. Interview data shows that a group of Hartford social studies teachers came up with the idea for the "We're Making History" curriculum. Also, these Hartford teachers, who were members of the Hartford Humanities Alliance, did the early work on curriculum development. According to the teachers, the Connecticut Humanities Council "took over" the idea, secured funding from different agencies, and gradually removed teachers from positions of responsibility. Currently, the Capitol Region Humanities

In the five years previous to the award of this grant, the CHC had received substantial funding (over $1.7 million dollars) for the development of a social studies curriculum from several prominent sources, including the Rockefeller Foundation ($675,000), the Hartford Fund for Public Giving ($250,000), the National Endowment for the Humanities (over $630,000), and from smaller Hartford-area philanthropies (over $180,000). The CHC's core middle school social studies curriculum (actually consisting of three units of instruction) became the platform for the present grant. The Hartford Public Schools had adopted the CHC's core curriculum, and, from 1994 through 1996, all of Hartford's middle school social studies teachers received training from the CHC in its use. Also, during this same time period, some middle school social studies teachers, who work in the Hartford-area suburban school districts, attended the three-week institutes that were focused on implementing the CHC curriculum. Approximately 350 teachers from the urban and suburban school districts had received the CHC's training in "current research on historical content and pedagogy to teach multi-cultural curricula." Hence, there had been a substantial investment and there was a large pool of teachers to draw upon for implementing this project.

The CRHA's goals for the 1996-97 "We're Making History" project were: (1) to improve multi-cultural teaching and learning and enhance participants' awareness and understanding of cultural diversity and (2) to promote student achievement by bringing students and teachers together in different settings to work collaboratively on museum-based field studies, authentic assessment, and state and national standards.

The project had the following six objectives:

1. To tie a nationally-recognized multi-cultural professional development initiative for elementary school teachers to an urban/suburban partnership among their students focused on

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Alliance runs the project. The Capitol Region Education Center (CREC) serves as the project's fiscal agent.

assessing student achievement.

2. To increase students' knowledge of content and skills within the social studies and language arts disciplines, the quality and productivity of their work, and their understanding of the contributions of diverse groups to the United States and world history.
3. To excite and engage students from different backgrounds in historical inquiry by regularly offering them opportunities to work together to understand the past from multiple perspectives through museum field study using primary source documents and artifacts.
4. To increase students' understanding of and appreciation for diversity and their ability to negotiate successfully in diverse cultural milieus.
5. To document students' achievement through a collection of model assessments with rubrics and samples of a range of student work for wider circulation.
6. To develop teacher leadership in multi-cultural social studies.

In addition to accomplishing the above goals and objectives, "We're Making History" would generate certain benefits for the participants. Included in the proposal were the following:

For the districts:

- Provides teachers with ongoing collaboration with CRHA historians, writing, arts, museum and pedagogy specialists in implementation of multi-cultural social studies curricula.
- Supports diversity agendas in local and regional strategic plans.

For the teachers:

- Provides staff development and support for teaching with documents, writing in the social studies, and collaborating with museums to design field study experiences for children which are integrated into curricula rather than enhancement add-ons.
- Provides diversity training, Project Adventure and conflict/resolution training.
- Provides opportunities for collaboration with colleagues around rich social studies content—develops communities of learners.
- Provides opportunities for creation of performance-based student

assessments, piloting them and reaching consensus on rubrics and definitions of quality in student achievement.

For the students:

- Provides opportunities for Hartford classes to partner with suburban classes to learn about diversity both from working together and from a multi-cultural curriculum.
- Provides 3–5 museum or arts-based field study trips for partner classes to undertake together.
- Provides opportunities for active, project-oriented learning, that is, "doing history."
- Provides training in conflict resolution and skills for interaction with diverse groups.

The following list presents a brief sketch of the project's planned operations for 1996-97.

- 12 CRHA-trained teachers from the suburban schools would form partnerships with 12 CRHA-trained teachers from Hartford's schools. Hence, total participation would include 24 previously trained teachers and approximately 575 students.
- The teachers' students would work together on 17 days at both school sites and at different museums and field sites.
- 2 days of visits by the partners would be devoted to orientation sessions, with one day spent at the urban school and one day at the suburban school.
- 15 days would be divided into 3 modules of 5 days each and would focused on a field study that was based upon the CRHA's core curriculum.
- Products of the students' work (including diaries, stories, and so on) would be exhibited for parents and other staff and students in the schools.
- Teachers would attend a three-day workshop in late August 1996 and 9 after-school workshops that would provide training in the use of the materials, common planning time, and opportunities for teachers to discuss the project's development.

The project intended to promote the students' multiracial and multi-

cultural understanding through their sustained, collaborative work sessions and through the content of the core curriculum which was written by the CRHA staff. Secondary concerns that received some attention throughout the project were: team building, project adventure, and development of conflict resolution skills.

A newsletter would inform parents of their children's experiences in the collaborative, inter-district projects. The project's officials would solicit parents' assistance with the student's visits to the partner schools and different field study sites. Also, parents would be invited to observe different aspects of the project, including students' presentations and procedures for collaborative assessment.

Data from the evaluation of the 1996-97 implementation of the "We're Making History" curriculum shows that teachers and students benefit from the opportunity to come together for sustained partnering activities at their different schools and at the various museums and field study sites in the greater Hartford area. Most of the effect from this project is general, rather than specific and measurable, but nonetheless it is important. Teachers said that they appreciated the opportunity to plan together with their colleagues for the collaborative work of teaching the multi-cultural social studies curriculum to middle school children from the Hartford and suburban public school districts. Children talked and wrote about the different sites and experiences they had with their partners in social studies. The project did not succeed in producing assessment instruments or baseline data for determining the specific impact on children in the areas of basic skills, critical thinking, or advanced research skills.

There were other issues in this project. For instance, the number of participating teachers from the suburbs was too low in fall 1996 and was increased through pressure from principals who "volunteered" their teachers. Teachers were disappointed in the design and management of the project's professional development phase. In particular, there was insufficient focus on the specific needs of grade level teachers, new materials were delivered too late for teachers' study and planning, and the curriculum is age-inappropriate for the middle school child.

Summing up the professional development experience, one teacher said, "it was a back breaking, great waste of time." Also, teachers were concerned that meetings rarely started on time and usually ended with participants leaving early.

The project did not adequately appreciate or address the problems of implementing a curriculum on an inter-district basis. The project's management team considered its curriculum to be a finished product for direct application in all participating schools. "We're Making History" was adopted by the Hartford Public School District. However superintendents from some of the suburban schools would not accept the CRHA curriculum, because their school districts had developed their own social studies curriculum and their teachers were expected to teach that material. Also, CRHA's professional development and curriculum development were seen by different participants as poorly managed and top-down. Teachers, in particular, did not like being told what to teach, how, and why by "specialists" who had no professional experience in teaching the middle school child in the public schools.

Despite the problems enumerated above, this project should continue in a revised format because Hartford and the State of Connecticut need positive results from initiatives such as this one. The core idea of partnering by Hartford and suburban public school teachers and their students and the use of primary source materials from different cultures for middle school social studies education are highly valued by the participating teachers, their students, and the parents. Everyone sees the great potential for community development and education in this joint effort to study history.

The report to follow includes a brief discussion of the methodology, analysis of qualitative and quantitative data, and concluding remarks. At the end, is a list of recommendations for improvement.

Methodology

The purpose of this study by Curriculum Research and Evaluation (CRE) is to determine the extent to which this project accomplished its goals and objectives, with special attention to the project's impact on students' achievement. To secure the data that would be necessary to describe and understand the project's impact, the evaluator developed a number of instruments for observations of key events and interviews and surveys of participants. The methodology included both quantitative and qualitative approaches to data collection. The evaluator devoted time to observing the project's modules and relevant meetings, including classroom teaching, visits to field study areas, workshops or seminars. Also, the evaluator collected various documents and artifacts that were produced by the project, either by the teachers, the students, or project officials. There was also some time devoted by the evaluator to consulting with the project's principal representatives on the evaluation and on the project's characteristics, history, and future direction.

CRE's work on the evaluation of "We're Making History" did not begin until spring 1997, after the project's planning phase was completed and after two of the three modules were finished. Despite the late start, CRE made the most of opportunities to collect data at the remaining teachers' meetings, site visits to museums and field study areas, and classroom visits by partners in both Hartford and the suburban school districts.

At the end of the year, CRE developed an assessment instrument to collect the teachers' perceptions of the project (see Appendix). The items on the instrument are based on the project's goals, objectives, and activities. CRE had planned to conduct an anonymous mail survey to all of the teacher participants and to a random sample of eligible teacher participants from the large pool of previously trained "veterans," both Hartford and suburban public school district teachers. The teachers' assurance of anonymity would have helped CRE to collect data objectively from relevant sources for a statistical analysis. However, the

program director decided not to have data collected by mail from the eligible "veteran" teachers. Instead, survey data would be collected on-site and only from the 1996-97 teacher participants. CRE reluctantly agreed to this requirement for a narrow data base, requested that the project's officials not be present during CRE's administration of the teachers' evaluation instrument, and would send mail-out surveys to any participating teachers who were absent. The survey protocol followed this latter design. However, the request for non-interference was not honored. Not only were project officials present in the same small room when the teachers completed the evaluation instrument, the officials turned the meeting into a discussion of the project's merits and an overall appreciation of the project director's work. They did not ask for constructive criticism. They asked teachers to report on the project's outstanding merits, memories, or stories, so that the next newsletter would include the teachers' positive comments.

Thus, the survey data that was collected on-site during the CRHA's administration of the teachers' evaluation instrument should be seen as "affected" by the project officials' presence and interference. In the least, it is an incomplete data set. CRE's position on the process for collection of survey data is validated by critical views that were mailed to CRE from teacher participants who were not present for the evaluation session and from other local educators who are aware of the CRHA project. These written comments parallel the criticism of this project that CRE received in interviews.

Project's Schedule of Events for 1996-97

[Although not a part of this project's operations per se, these workshops which were held in 1995-96 were designed for the "stable" of expert university professors to train the social studies teachers in the CRHA curriculum, and thereby create a "large pool" from which participants would be chosen.]

Prior to Project

- 1995-96: 8 day workshop on CRHA "Becoming an American" curriculum plus 2 day-long field trips to museums.

- 1995-96: 10 day workshop on CRHA "Migration" curriculum plus 2 day-long field trips to museums.
- 1995-96: 11 day workshop on CRHA "Cities" curriculum plus 2 day-long field trips to museums.

During Project

- September 1996-97: 2 days introduction and teacher meetings for teacher participants.
- Monthly 1996-97: 2.5 hour after-school teacher meetings.
- Periodic 1996-97: 6 voluntary after-school teacher meetings at museums.
- September 1996: 2 day orientation session for partnering teachers and students, one at each school.
- Periodic 1996-97: 3 field trips (approximately 1 hour on site) by partnering classrooms from each grade level to different museums, coordinated with Modules 1–3.
- Periodic 1996-97: 2 partnering sessions at urban and 2 partnering sessions at suburban school classrooms (total of 4 partnering sessions for teachers and students).

Selection of Participants

Data from interviews indicates that teacher participants were chosen on one or more of the following bases:

- "veteran" CRHA trained teacher who wishes to continue using the CRHA core curriculum;
- Hartford public school district teachers: CRHA core social studies curriculum is "mandated" by the district, hence teachers must teach "We're Making History;"
- suburban public school district teachers: voluntary use of the "We're Making History" curriculum and voluntary participation in the 1996-97 CRHA project;
- teachers who attended the 1995-96 CRHA training workshops;
- teachers whose building principals required them to participate in

the 1996-97 CRHA social studies core curriculum project.

Interview data also reveals that the project experienced some difficulty in the summer and fall of 1997 with soliciting participation, especially from suburban teachers and school districts. Suburban school district superintendents, in particular, would not support the adoption of this curriculum. The reasons for the preference of some public school teachers and district administrators not to participate in this project are numerous, they vary somewhat, but there is nonetheless a high level of agreement among their opinions. Included among the reasons for not participating are the following:

- CRHA's "We're Making History" curriculum in its present form is not relevant to the suburban school district's curriculum (and may not be relevant to the Hartford school district's curriculum);
- CRHA's curriculum is not sufficiently grounded in the State's curriculum framework for social studies;
- this core social studies curriculum project has had a history of problems in the areas of curriculum development and project management (i.e., payments are late, scheduling problems, poor response to inquiries, etc.);
- teachers said CRHA created "negative feelings" among teachers during the previous summer and year-long seminars and institutes because they were "deadly boring," leading some teachers to raise questions about the presenters' credentials;
- teachers prefer not to disrupt the flow of their curriculum with extraneous interests, waiting for buses, and extra work required of them;
- the core curriculum gives too much emphasis to "artistic" interests at the expense of historical facts and interpretation and skill development;
- there was an excessive emphasis on "intellectual scholarship and interpretation" applied to local, United States, and world history;
- teachers judged the CRHA curriculum materials not to be "user-friendly" for teachers or students: for the teachers the curriculum guide was seen as poorly developed, requiring them to do

substantial revision and development before use; for the students: the reading materials were not age-appropriate or they were too advanced for many individuals, and assignments were ordinary and redundant;

- parents and teachers were opposed to the content of the CRHA curriculum because they saw it as offensive or inappropriate (e.g., sexually suggestive nude portraits of women and phallic artifacts were included) or obscure and irrelevant (e.g., a large amount of the art was highly abstract paintings, collages, and sculptures), and some parents stated that they would not allow their children to participate;
- school districts' teachers find the content of this curriculum to be "good for exposure, but extraneous, we don't have the time for this," and they cover the contributions of diverse cultures more effectively in a different manner; and
- teachers prefer not to graft onto their social studies program a partial curriculum that is not finished and a project that has a loose or uncertain schedule.

What these teachers and school district administrators—those who chose not to participate in the 1996-97 CRHA project—liked most about this project, in general, was bringing together the different children from Hartford and the suburban public school districts. What they liked least about "We're Making History" was the content of the curriculum, including concerns for its unfinished and "unfriendly" condition, objectionable material for middle school children's education, the high readability level of most reading material, and the "costs" to the school and classroom that came from the CRHA's prior history of curriculum development and management problems.

On the positive side, teachers who volunteered to participate in this project, some of whom were "veterans," also cited the sustained student and teacher partnerships as its most valuable aspect. These teachers accepted the curriculum materials as a starting point and during the course of the year they made their own revisions and additions as needed. They circumvented the problem with the high readability rating

of the students' texts by round-robin reading and the teacher reading the text aloud to the students. In regard to problems with curriculum development, project management and scheduling (such as late buses), these teachers felt that the project's pluses outweighed its minuses.

The adverse opinions about its core social studies curriculum notwithstanding, the CRHA maintained that it had "wrung the risk from this approach" during the previous decade of "diligent effort." Now, during this 1996-97 implementation phase, it would make a difference in social studies education for the teachers and students in Hartford and the surrounding suburban school districts. During the 1996-97 academic year, the CRHA project attracted 26 teacher participants.

The project's officials explained that the CSDE wished to know the answers to these two questions: (1) What is the character and extent of the educational interactions between the urban and suburban teachers and students? And (2) what impact has the project had on students' achievement, particularly in regard to the social studies content and relevant basic skills, such as reading, writing, problem-solving, and critical reasoning.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The following two sections present an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from "We're Making History." The qualitative data consists of the record of observations which the evaluator made during attendance at various events, including collaborative class meetings at urban and suburban schools, field study visits to museums, and teachers' meetings. In addition, the evaluator collected written survey data and documents and conducted interviews with different participants, including the program director and her associates, teachers, students, and parents. The quantitative data comes from items on a survey that was distributed to the teachers who participated in this project.

Observation and Interview Data

Impact on Teachers. Did "We're Making History" improve multi-cultural teaching and learning (Goal One, part A)? Also, to what extent

did this project enhance participants' awareness and understanding of cultural diversity (Goal One, part B)? The qualitative data tends to support an affirmative answer to the first question.

The main driver of this project was the process of instruction—a key provision of the grant—that brought teachers and students together for sustained time periods to work collaboratively on social studies content. In view of the circumstances, namely, the sharply contrasting social conditions of Hartford's public school children and the suburban public school children, it is at least plausible that any content area from the middle school curriculum would work well in this process of education to "improve multi-cultural teaching and learning." A main qualification should be choosing content, especially written material, that is readable by a large majority of the students. Data shows that students, teachers, and schools benefitted from the exchange process.

The teacher partnerships represented 4th (4 sets), 5th (7 sets), and 6th (1 set) grades and included 6 men and 20 women (26 teacher participants total), most of whom are Caucasian. However, some of the women teachers are African American. From the suburban school districts, there were: 4 teacher partners from Farmington, 1 teacher from East Hartford, 4 teachers from Simsbury, and 4 teachers from Windsor, for a total of 13 suburban teacher partners. From the Hartford school district there were 14 teacher partners in all—there was one two-person team. Hence, there was an equal representation of classes from urban and suburban middle schools. There was some variance across the grade levels, with only one set of 6th grade classrooms. Also, teacher role models from specific ethnic groups were lacking and there was a shortage of male school teachers.

Data shows that the participating teachers' CRHA training history was not complete, as had been anticipated by the project's leadership. The officials had assumed that, because the CRHA had already trained over 350 teachers from the Hartford and nearby suburban school districts, the project would have a "large pool" of experienced participating teachers. Only eight of the Hartford teachers were "veterans" of the CRHA project, which meant that they had received the

necessary training prior to implementing this project and had some experience with teaching the CRHA's core social studies curriculum. One Hartford teacher had just recently completed her training, but had not taught with these curriculum materials previously. Three of the Hartford teachers had received no training. (There was no data on the status of the remaining 3 Hartford school district teachers.) Among the suburban teachers, 4 had received no training from CRHA prior to participating in this project, 6 had just received the training, and only 1 was a veteran. (There was no data on the remaining 1 suburban school district teacher.) There were no teacher participants from the following school districts, which the CRHA's staff said had been participating in its social studies project during previous years: East Windsor, Ellington, Enfield, New Hartford, Rocky Hill, Vernon, Wethersfield, and West Hartford.

The above data indicates that the project experienced some difficulty in attracting "veteran" teachers from both Hartford and suburban school districts to serve as participants in the project, despite the CRHA's claims about the quality of its core curriculum and its history of professional development. In fact, interview data shows that several teachers felt that they were conscripts for the project. They said that at the beginning of the school year, they had no idea that they would be involved with this project, would not have volunteered for it, but were pressured by their principals to participate.

The student population from the Hartford school district included approximately 90% who were classified by the participating teachers as students of color. The two dominant ethnic groups were African American and Hispanic, the latter were chiefly Puerto Rican. The suburban school district student population varied greatly in terms of percentage of students of color, but had relatively low percentages. East Hartford teachers reported 60% students of color in their classrooms, Windsor 45–50% students of color, Farmington 2% students of color, and Simsbury no students of color. Thus, the project did accomplish the purpose of bringing together children from different social and economic groups.

The ratio of male students to female students in the Hartford school district was somewhat uneven at the individual classroom level. For instance, one Hartford classroom had 5 boys and 10 girls. The team-taught classroom had 24 boys and 18 girls. The ratio of males to females in the suburban school districts varied also, but did not exceed 3 more males or females in any classroom. In two classrooms at Windsor, the ratio was 50:50.

Teacher Meetings

During the course of the year, the project required teachers to attend nine training sessions on the implementation of the CRHA core curriculum. These sessions were offered on two evenings in a week, so that teachers could more easily fit the professional development aspect into their schedule. Usually, half of the teachers attended the first session and the other half attended the second session.

The teacher meetings were scheduled from 4:00 p.m. until 6:30 p.m in the Burton Lounge at Loomis Chaffee School, a private co-educational high school, located in Windsor, CT. However, participating teachers and project officials usually arrived at least fifteen minutes late, and the official meeting rarely started before 4:30 p.m. By 6:30 p.m. most participants had left. Protocol at these meetings was informal and often hectic. The meeting room was somewhat small for the size of the group, had poor acoustics, and no dividers or separate areas where small groups could escape from the noise.

The typical agenda for teacher meetings had a large group session for approximately thirty minutes at the start, then grade level break out groups were organized for the teachers. The large group meeting might focus on a general topic, such as a particular lesson in Module III or assessment. Teachers were encouraged to sit with their partners at all times, in order to reserve as much time as possible for collaborative planning. During break out sessions, teacher participants would receive explicit instructions on different aspects of the core curriculum, including children's readings, art work, writing, and assessment. Teachers would leave early, which meant that a summary statement at

the end, if spoken, nonetheless would not be heard by all who had attended.

Present at these meetings were the program director, Jane Christie, Dr. Ratté, who focused on the curriculum, Mark Williams, who had responsibility for assessment, and Lynn Hoffman, the writing consultant. These session leaders would alternate responsibility for the large group meeting times and rotate from group to group during the break out sessions. There was usually just enough time for the session leaders to introduce the new materials or next step to the teacher participants before the teachers became too sparse because of their early leaving or because the time ran out.

On the one hand, the meetings provided a good opportunity for the teachers from the different schools and towns to come together to learn about the social studies curriculum. They would look at photographs of the museum exhibits or art work and listen to interpretations provided by the current historical scholarship. There was also opportunity to share students' work, especially for the purpose of trying to establish some kind of a common system or rubric for assessment.

On the other hand, since the teacher partners only had this one CRHA sponsored meeting each month to coordinate their lessons and partnering visits, they were usually actively engaged in side conversations with their partners (partnering teachers also called each other on the phone periodically). With periodic appeals for attention from the project leaders, the teachers would stop and start their side discussions throughout the evening, in a more or less desperate attempt to put some kind of order on their partnering schedule.

What the project leaders may have thought was the principal reason for the meeting, namely, professional development, was actually a secondary or tertiary concern of the teachers. They had to make sure that they had synchronized their content coverage with their partners, that they had coordinated and finally set the bus schedule, that they had selected similar materials for their classes, and so on. Suddenly, a teacher on one side of the room would shout a question at a colleague or whole group of teachers on the other side of the room. The answer

would be shouted back. Here and there teachers would be grousing with each other about the students, the core curriculum, their principal, and so on. Hence, these teacher meetings had the kind of chaotic atmosphere one notices in the hallways of professional conferences.

Occasionally during the meetings, the program director would shout an announcement for everyone. This effort to tell every teacher a specific message was as disconcerting for the listener as it was difficult for the speaker, since the animated conversations of the teachers were compounded, if not amplified by the bare walls and hardwood flooring. On some occasions, Loomis Chaffee students were playing basketball in the gymnasium on the other side of the wall from the meeting room, which made hearing any conversation difficult and a general announcement nearly impossible to hear. The teacher meetings were hectic events.

The teacher meetings provided additional data to show that this project was not well managed. The meetings continually went in and out of focus in both the large group and break out sessions. Progress with the curriculum was more a result of teacher partners sticking to the pre-planned course outline and meeting the exigencies associated with school bus schedules, than it was a thoughtful response to the complex interplay of students, teachers, and subject matter.

A few teachers succeeded in producing a coherent and meaningful experience for themselves and their students. Indeed, the best results were obtained in schools where an informal team of teachers collaborated to make the project work for them. Other teachers would say that they had to go through a lot of trouble for this smorgasbord of readings, art work, field trips, and assignments. For most suburban teachers, at least, coherence between the CRHA core curriculum and their classroom and school curriculum was lacking.

Curriculum Development Issues

The project's officials delineated the history of the CRHA core curriculum project, including its past successes with securing funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, National Endowment for the

Humanities, Hartford Foundation for Public giving, and other philanthropies. Also, they described in detail the process of curriculum development that ultimately led to the three-module package known as "We're Making History."

Concerning curriculum development, project officials said that the original intent of the Alliance was to transform the social studies curriculum in the State of Connecticut. The existing curriculum was perceived by project officials as teacher- and textbook-dependent, out-of-date, and out of touch with the students' interests, especially for Hartford's African American and Hispanic communities. Changing the curriculum was seen as a fundamental step that they would accomplish by having teachers write the social studies curriculum in accordance with the "revisionist" perspective or "current scholarship." The participating teachers would receive advanced study in the current scholarship, write and design the social studies curriculum, and develop assessment procedures and instruments to measure students' progress.

In general, this overall design for curriculum reform is both innovative and consistent with curriculum development nationally. The interaction and collaboration of key participants and organizations at all levels tends to produce the most far reaching and lasting changes in schools. Hence, the Alliance was headed in the right direction, at least with respect to the general concerns for effective curriculum development and implementation.

However, approximately two years ago, the project's officials became impatient with and disappointed in the teacher-developed curriculum materials. "The teachers wrote bad curriculum," an official said. This judgement about the "bad curriculum development work" of the teachers was subsequently reported in an evaluation, which was written by Dr. Lou Ratté, who was then working as an evaluator for the Rockefeller Foundation. Also, the project's officials felt "frustrated" that they could not find a curriculum person to provide the direction that they wanted. One curriculum person that they had used "was not a 'historian'" and a second one that they brought on board "was a 'historian' of sorts, but was not useful."

Subsequent to the evaluation report, the project's officials relieved teachers of direct responsibility for curriculum design and development. A project official said, "We saw that the teachers needed more help with this social studies perspective and content. The teachers take a long time to understand this stuff." The officials assigned the curriculum task to the evaluator, Dr. Ratté, who also became the academic director for the CRHA grant. The revised process for curriculum development involved the following steps: (1) Dr. Ratté would do all of the design, content selection, and writing of the three social studies curriculum modules and (2) periodically during the year Dr. Ratté would meet with small teams of teachers from each grade level who had attended leadership and evaluation meetings to introduce the materials to them and to encourage discussions about the implications for classroom applications.

Now there was only one person chiefly responsible for writing the social studies curriculum. These materials were usually delivered to the teachers in a draft version a few days before their time for use in the classroom. As a result of the late delivery, the professional development aspects of the project involved the curriculum person telling the teachers what content was in the packets, what interpretations to use, and how the materials and assignments might be implemented by the teachers. This abbreviated, directed curriculum development process was evident during the monthly 2.5 hour after-school meetings of the participating teachers. The CRHA project was running behind schedule (in that there was not sufficient time for teachers to digest and revise the curriculum) and was tightly focused on the teachers' use of pre-established content and methods. Teachers' interaction and collaboration for curriculum and professional development were minimal.

According to a project official, "Lou wrote the curriculum. The teachers may think that they wrote it, but Lou wrote it *all* during the last two years. The teachers (especially in Hartford) have had the final version of the curriculum in their hands for the past year." In addition to the work by Dr. Ratté, the CRHA employed three writing consultants, one for each grade level module. During the 1996-97 grant, there was also a pedagogical consultant, Mr. Mark Williams (social studies teacher

at Loomis Chaffee School), and a writing specialist, Ms. Lynn Hoffman, (consultant from the Connecticut Writing Project) in addition to the program director, Ms. Christie.

The project's officials did not visit teachers' classrooms often to observe the teachers' work with the new core curriculum. However, one project official said that on the few occasions when they visited classrooms, the teachers were "teaching the curriculum, but it was not the curriculum that we taught them. It was their (the individual teacher's) curriculum. In many instances, it is not what the CRHA had taught the teachers and it is very simple, copy work." Hence, the project's officials were not pleased with the results prior to the implementation of this grant and saw the present grant as an opportunity to correct things. In short, there would be more time for teacher training on the "We're Making History" curriculum and its authentic assessment of students' performance to insure that the core curriculum would be implemented according to CRHA's expectations.

Why did the "veteran" teachers' curriculum vary so much from the CRHA's expectations and, especially, why would the results come out as "very simple, copy work"? The following items help to illuminate the project's unresolved and significant issues in curriculum development.

- CRHA project's team consisted of people who classified themselves as "trained historians," not teachers or educators;
- the "specialists" who provided advanced study in current scholarship are traditional professors of history at area colleges and universities;
- there were no "specialists" who presented a different perspective or a viewpoint of history that was critical of the "current historical scholarship";
- there was no one on the leadership team with practical experience in urban public education and sociology, i.e., there was no urban public school teacher in a key leadership position;
- none of the key players, including the "specialists,' is an experienced middle school classroom teacher; and
- none of the key players has a professional education or career in

curriculum development, assessment, and child psychology that would be appropriate for the public middle school applications.

In view of these findings, CRE is not surprised that the CRHA experienced difficulty in attracting teachers to its project. It is also not surprised that, in general, the teachers who became participants followed the instructions from the CRHA leadership during the curriculum workshops, added their own contributions in the classroom (thus, transforming the core curriculum into something that the CRHA did not want), and the students' work—indeed, the process of developing and implementing the core social studies curriculum—is characterized as "very simple copy work." After all, the curriculum was mandated for all Hartford middle school social studies teachers, so they had to use it regardless of their preferences. Teachers received a small stipend of $150 for their participation. "Just get it over with," might have been the teachers' resolve.

From the standpoint of the teachers, they were doing what they were expected to do. In fact, the data above shows that "followership" is what the project officials really intended, and not teacher leadership in curriculum design and development. The reason why the project's officials chose to remove the teachers from the key role as curriculum designers and developers was their perception that these teachers' were not competent to develop their own social studies curriculum. More specifically, from the viewpoint of the project's officials, these teachers had not mastered the "complex and politically volatile topics (of current historical scholarship) intellectually." They needed the CRHA and handpicked specialists from the university to train them in the content and methods of teaching that are appropriate to this way of thinking about history and the method of teaching social studies.

Students' Achievement

Did "We're Making History" promote student achievement (Goal Two)? To accomplish this goal the project relied upon a process that would bring students and teachers together in different settings to work collaboratively on museum-based field studies, authentic assessment,

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and state and national standards.

The officials for "We're Making History" did not collect or examine data, such as Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) scores and teachers' grades, that would show the extent to which students' experience with the CRHA's core social studies curriculum contributed to improved levels of academic achievement. Of course, it would not be reasonable to expect measurable differences for students who were in the project for this 1996-97 implementation, especially since CMTs are administered in the fall term. However, the project might have examined the impact of the curriculum and the veteran teachers' work during the previous years, by watching the current cohorts of 4th, 6th, and 8th graders' CMT scores, to see if there was some degree of improvement in their students' reading, writing, and problem-solving skills. Without such data, it is not possible to say whether or not the CRHA's new social studies curriculum and instruction had a positive, measurable impact on the students' academic knowledge or skills.

The project did call for the development and use of alternative means for assessing students' performance, but the CRHA officials said that they were not successful in their endeavors to make a reliable device for "authentic" assessment. The teachers assessed their students' work on several assignments and often used the same guidelines or "rubrics," but no one was confident that there was a systematic application of the these alternative assessment guidelines or instruments by the teachers. Given the nature of the assignments and products (some were open-ended), it was as difficult for the teachers to hold all students to the same criteria as it was for all of the teachers to have a common conception of those criteria, especially when applied to the students' work.

Also, a study of the students' products showed that within schools and classrooms and across school districts, especially between Hartford and the suburban school districts, there were discrepancies between what the teachers assessed as "outstanding," "satisfactory," and "unsatisfactory." For example, a small minority of students produced original written materials (i.e., essays and diaries) that were very high quality prose. Other students wrote with incomplete sentences, poor

content, and bad grammar. Many classroom sets of student-made materials (such as essays and diaries) were so consistent that the teachers must have dictated the statements for students to copy in more or less the same words. Also, what a teacher deemed a satisfactory performance in one school might be recorded as superior by a teacher in another school. Unsatisfactory here would be satisfactory there.

On the positive side, teachers said that the production by a few students of exemplary materials helped the students who produced mediocre or poor products to see what their peers were capable of making and this material also provided some incentive for them to produce higher quality school work. On the negative side, the Hartford students would often see themselves as lower level performers in relationship with their suburban peers. Generally speaking, the Hartford students' work was at a lower level than the suburban students'. Data from observations shows that the urban students usually experienced difficulty reading the texts of the core curriculum. Often the Hartford teachers made up for their students' reading deficiencies by reading and interpreting the text to them. Also, the Hartford students' writing skills were frequently below the average for their grade level.

Classroom Interaction

Data from classroom observations and interviews with participants reveals that this project led to some noteworthy differences in classroom and school protocol and expectations for social studies education. On the whole, these were highly positive educational experiences for teachers, students, and communities. There were also a number of issues, but there were few surprises here.

In the middle of the project's year, on a day when the Hartford students and teachers visited their partners in a suburban school, there was a high level of anticipation and interest on the part of all concerned. In the suburban school classroom, the teacher would devote at least thirty minutes to reminding the children of the CRHA core curriculum content and assignments. There would be a brief review of the general topic, such as "Migration." Next, the teacher would pose questions

regarding specific items, such as paintings and primary source material that the children had studied previously. Does anybody here have a question they need answered? The teacher would ask. Also, there would be a discussion of the present activity that the children would engage in with their partners from the Hartford school. The students would be busy putting their other materials away and helping to prepare the room for the influx of 15–20 additional students.

Often, the Hartford school bus would arrive later than the scheduled time for the collaborative project to begin. In such cases, everyone accommodated the exigency. In the suburban school, the teacher and students used the extra time to prepare the classroom and discuss the curriculum content. The Hartford teacher and students engaged in similar wait-time activity, but with the disadvantage of waiting for the bus to arrive in a hallway or outside the school.

When the visiting school children arrived (from a suburb or from Hartford), they were escorted by their teacher immediately from the bus to the partner's classroom. Some home teachers had their students greet their visiting partners at the door to the school. Once inside the room, both the suburban teacher and the Hartford teacher helped match students to their partners. This matching would involve a delay of approximately 10 minutes and some confusion. The reason for this difficulty is that there is a relatively high and regular turnover or "mobility" rate among the Hartford school children. Hence, some of the Hartford children would be genuinely unfamiliar to their "partners" who came from (or were at) the suburban school. And, of course, the same experience was true for the suburban children relative to meeting their Hartford school district partners for the first time.

The teachers would wait until the previously established partners had matched themselves up and then they would assign the new children from Hartford to their suburban partners. Of course, the disadvantage for the Hartford children was that they had no prior experience with the exchange and much less experience with the curriculum. Nonetheless, everyone took this brief interlude in stride and within a few minutes all of the students were seated together and ready to begin work.

At this point, the home teacher would announce to everyone the assignment for the day. The visiting teacher would usually serve as an assisting team-teacher. Within minutes all of the children would be busy with their assignment. They would read to each other, ask each other questions, complete different aspects of the assignment, and cooperate with each other in the preparation of some kind of report or product. The teachers made the rounds from student group to student group providing guidance, answering questions, and generally encouraging the students to work together and do their best work. Occasionally, some students would get off task or engage in a minor infraction of classroom rules, and at such times one or both of the teachers would intervene to get the students back on task or apply a disciplinary technique. Throughout the event, the classroom would be characterized by a fairly high level of activity that transpired in somewhat cramped quarters. To alleviate the crowded conditions, the home teacher would sometimes organize small groups of children to work in the hallway or the library. In such instances, they might also rely on the parents who had accompanied the class and the visiting teacher. The school visit involving active time for collaboration between teacher and student partners would transpire within approximately a one hour time period.

Museum Visit by Partners

The project's schedule for museum visits in fall 1996 included trips to the following sites: Hartford Atheneum (5th and 6th grades), Old Sturbridge Village (4th grade), Yale Art Gallery (6th grade), Hartford Craftery (5th grade), and Boston Children's Center (6th grade). In spring 1997, the project's partners went to the following sites: Harriet Beecher Stowe Center (4th grade), Charter Oak Cultural Center (5th grade), Antiquarian and Landmark Society and Butler McCook House (6th grade). The project's trip records suggest that some sites scheduled for fall were also visited in spring by different groups.

Visits to the museums and field study areas, such as Old Sturbridge Village, were similar to partnering events at the different schools and were also perceived by participants as highly positive events. Museum

visits entailed a number of issues that will need attention in the future.

Naturally, the children expressed high levels of excitement at getting out of their classrooms for at least half a day and discharged their excitement during the bus rides to and from the sites. The museum visits required both partnering classes to schedule and board their buses from their respective schools with their teachers and a small collection of parents who served as chaperones. Unlike the children, the parents and teachers usually boarded the field trip bus with a sense of foreboding. A trip could take as little as 20 minutes for travel from a Hartford school to Hartford's Atheneum to an hour or two hours for a trip from a suburban or Hartford school to the Boston Children's Museum or Yale Art Gallery.

Inevitably, one group would arrive at the site before the other group, since their schools are in different towns, separated by twenty miles or more. In some cases, the group in the first bus to arrive would wait a few minutes and the second group would appear. In other cases, however, something happened, such as a mix-up with the bus dispatcher, bus breakdown, or a wrong pick up address, to cause a significant delay for the second bus. Then, the group to arrive first, after waiting for 15–20 minutes, would take the tour without its partners. This led to a lost opportunity for the partnering adventure, in that students and teachers went through the experience as they normally would. It was also a "cost" to the field site or museum,, since they would have to adjust their schedule to accommodate two separate groups—for an extended period of time.

In the best of circumstances, both groups arrived at approximately the same time. Teachers and parents would organize the children to match partners from Hartford with partners from the suburban school district. Each teacher would take a partnering group with half of her students and half of the partnering teacher's students. Parents usually went with the teacher from their child's school. At this point, the museum staff would take over operations and conduct the children, teachers, and parents on the educational tour of the facility.

The Museum or field study staff of different sites had somewhat

different procedures, which, understandably, they had constructed for their own operations. However, CRHA had familiarized the field study staffs with the project's purposes, in order to facilitate the project's on-site operations. When the partners arrived at the field site, the resident staff took the main responsibility for guiding the visiting partners through the facility and acquainting them with the various objects and scenes.

Whether the field study event transpired at an outdoor facility, such as Old Sturbridge Village, or at an indoor museum, such as the Hartford Atheneum, the resident staff adopted an instructor's approach. Briefly, their method involved asking the children to figure out what they were seeing or experiencing, rather than merely telling them the facts relevant to a particular scene or object. Usually, but not always, the teachers had provided the necessary instruction prior to the museum visit, in order to prepare the students for what they would encounter. The teachers' advanced organization of the children's thinking facilitated the docent's work and both reinforced and deepened the children's understanding.

In general, everyone was pleased with the visits to the field study sites because it provided a genuine break from the classroom routines. Also, the field study sites and museums had a more or less direct relationship with the curriculum materials. Usually, the art objects that were described or depicted in the curriculum materials were the same as what the children would see at the site. In at least one instance, a local museum had scheduled an exhibit that the CRHA project used for its own purposes.

To explain further, the Hartford Atheneum opened its exhibit, "Colt: The Making of an American Legend," during the project's migration module. Connecticut born Samuel Colt, inventor of the revolver and founder of the world famous Colt Patent Firearms Manufacturing Company, had also developed an ingenious social system for his factory workers, most of whom were European immigrants. This exhibit offered an opportunity for the students to see the products of the Colt armory, study the lifestyles of the factory workers and prominent social and political figures of the day, and even tour the Colt family furniture and

heirlooms. Also, Mrs. Elizabeth Jarvis Colt had a substantial private art gallery, which revealed not only her artistic tastes, but also something of that era's values, especially for the well-to-do families.

According to teachers, the students were especially attracted to the large "rampant colt," which was on display at the Atheneum. To this day it remains the trademark etched into Colts and, until recently, stood atop the famous blue onion dome at the now vacant gun manufacturing site in downtown Hartford. The project's key assignment for students was to have them write an obituary of Sam Colt.

A related assignment that was repeated in every museum was "Doing a Visual Analysis." This task required students to select at least one art object and answer a number of questions pertaining to the visual experience and the object itself. Sometimes this assignment was completed by the student partners. At other times, students completed their visual analysis independently.

The repetition of this visual analysis assignment and the questions themselves contributed to ennui for the students and some frustration for their teachers. One teacher recognized that the assignment was not accomplishing its purposes. She consulted with the art teacher in her building and together they revised and improved the instrument. Their chief complaint, which is a theme in regard to the curriculum in general, was that the questions, intended for unidentified applications, were vague and confusing, especially for the children. The children usually completed this assignment by scurrying around the museum to copy down basic information, such as the size of the painting, describe its boarder or frame, and so on.

Partnering visits to the museums carried with them a number of assumptions, one of which was that the teachers would be sufficiently familiar with the objects so that they could provide the preparatory work in the classroom prior to the visit and also assist the docents during the tour. Things did not always work out as planned. There were instances when there was no docent available. In at least one case, this was according to CRHA's plan, namely, that the teachers would assume full responsibility for guiding their students through the museum. However,

the African American artist whose works were on display at the museum specialized in abstract representations. This was a particularly bad choice for teachers' practical applications, since data from the site visit shows that neither the teachers (one was African American) nor the parents (one of whom was African American) nor the children (a mix of different racial groups) could make sense of what they were viewing.

Interview data from the African American parent who served as chaperone on the site visit showed that he had high level understanding not only of his cultural ancestry, but also, due to his profession, a good grasp of the essential elements of teaching and teacher preparation. He was not pleased that he had given up a day's work for this experience. After voluntarily expressing his sincere disappointment with the visit, he gave the following critique:

- "there is no coordination with the school curriculum;
- "there is no training for the teachers on this art work;
- "there is no preparation for the parents—what are we supposed to do here, just stand around and keep the kids from fighting with each other?
- "the children are not coordinated in reference to the teachers and small groups;
- "I'm specially trained to organize groups of all kids and sizes, but I have no knowledge about this art and even a fool can see that this is about as abstract as you can get;"
- "I took off a day of work to come in here and watch my daughter and her friends walk around and write down the names of these different paintings and their size, dates, and whether its oil or what not. What kind of a deal is that?"

This Hartford parent was very disappointed. What he had hoped would be an uplifting and challenging experience for his daughter, her friends, and himself was a farce. His recommendations, which follow, indicate how well he understood the task at hand:

- "children should be given a basic introduction and then guidance in their projects;
- "small groups of urban and suburban children should be working

together on common projects where all of the tasks are not the same, to prevent the conclusion that one group will emerge superior to another;

- "if the children are to study this (abstract) art, they should not be free to make up their own minds, so that anything counts. Instead they should be given some information to think about, so that they can make some kind of sense out of the art work. As it is, she (his daughter) doesn't have a clue about the painting's meaning. Neither do I nor her teachers here and the other parents; and
- "finally, they (CRHA) have to have goals, objectives, and activities all clearly established beforehand for something like this (bringing urban and suburban children together for socialization) or you will not accomplish a thing."

The African American parent's perception of problems with the CRHA project complimented a museum docent's observations. Both of these participants possessed a high level of knowledge and skill with instructional programs. The docent, however, had observed numerous visits to the museum not only by this project, but also by numerous other schools and organizations. The docent's comments appear next:

- "why do they bring these children here only for the African American exhibit? There is nothing wrong with that, but it is such a small exhibit in such a small room and there are 50 children in this group. Besides, there are many other things that they could study while they are here today. The kind of broadening and deepening that comes from viewing our great variety of art work is what draws people here, but they don't care about that;
- "this group (CRHA as a whole) is not organized. We (docents) noticed it with the first visit last fall. Let me explain, we are working here today and only have this group of 50 children (the partners) now. One look will tell you that they did not come in here well organized, so that takes up a lot of time. They should have done that earlier. We (docents) don't have time to stand here and wait for this. There are other groups coming today. Our department leader has told the program director again and again

to get the children and teachers organized, but nothing happens."

Comments from a teacher add yet another, parallel critique to this study of the museum visits by the partnering classes. His comments appear below:

- "in some of the museums all that the children get is a person who talks at them and tells them what they should see in the paintings. I thought this was supposed to encourage the *children's* thinking about art and history;"
- "in some places, I have asked the guest speaker to tell me a piece of factual information, like the title of the work of art that he is describing, but he doesn't know the title. Why does that tell the children?"
- "another guest speaker at a museum asked the children what they saw in a particular painting. They had no idea. She told them that some people think it is a woman's uterus. Why are we having these children study sexually explicit or suggestive paintings? On the other hand, if that had been broom stick, would she have said it looked like a man's penis? What is the point of all this?"
- "almost all of this art work depicts the most depressing side of immigration and social problems of people, like the African Americans. Why only show these kids the negative things about history and life? They have enough of that in their lives. There are plenty of inventors and truly uplifting events in all ethnic groups that we could focus on. What reason for hope does this curriculum offer the kids, whether they live in Hartford or the suburbs? This curriculum as a whole has no balance. It's not representative across different ethnic groups nor within them."
- "so much of the African American art that the students view in the museums is so abstract. I wonder, what is the point of it all (the curriculum)?"
- "the suburban kids usually answer most of the questions. The Hartford kids are usually silent when a docent asks a question. It's the curriculum that produces that result because the Hartford kids can't read very well. Then, when we study contributions

from African Americans, about all we have are these pictures. What is this teaching the kids?"

- "today you saw that I had to move the boys away from one of the paintings at the museum, the one with the prostitute sitting on the man's lap. Why are we exposing these children to such sexually suggestive paintings? I don't care that somebody who painted it wanted to depict a social problem. That painting is age-inappropriate. Also, these kids have parents and I have to deal with them."

This teacher, a ten year veteran, went on to describe the parents' response to the CRHA curriculum. He said that he has been the target of parents' complaints, that some parents pulled their children out of his class, and others wrote very strong letters of disapproval to the teacher's principal. These letters are now part of his permanent record.

This teacher was not a resister. Like the Hartford parent and the docent quoted above, he believed that children from the Hartford and the suburban school districts need to come together for educational projects, but he insisted that there is a right way and a wrong way. His final remarks sum up his perception of the CRHA curriculum: "the council does not understand education, children, or public schools. The primary resource materials may be interesting to the 'current history scholars,' but they are poor choice for most of these kids. They are hard to read, especially for the Hartford kids. The professional development is inadequate. The 'book' has no index, so it's very difficult to locate related material and topics."

At a general level of analysis the visits to museums and field study sites were a welcome relief to all of the participants, but especially the partnering children. There is no denying the importance of sustained, positive social interaction between cultural and racial groups for the development of wholesome communities. However, at a more specific level of analysis, data shows that the project was not accomplishing the other important objectives, namely, imparting knowledge and skills that are relevant to the tasks, so that everyone involved would recognize the full benefits of the encounter.

Data shows that the major problems for this project were age-inappropriate content and less than effective project organization and management. This finding suggests that the project's developmental aspects were running too far behind or, at least, too close to the implementation phase for effective teaching and learning. Also, if the middle school teachers had a role in the curriculum development process, they would have made better selections for reading and viewing, a greater variety of assignments, and a clearer purpose for visits to schools and field study sites. In brief, teachers, docents, and parents were not adequately prepared and the curriculum materials were age-inappropriate.

Social Studies Curriculum Materials

Due to the importance of the CRHA core curriculum for the overall success of the "We're Making History" project and the large number of comments, both positive and negative, CRE chose to devote some time to a study of these packets. We began with a study of previous evaluations.

In the recent past, CRHA had hired two consultants to write reviews of the curriculum and each reviewer pronounced the materials to be "outstanding." For instance, one reviewer wrote, "the curricula (sic)...is no less than monumental." Another reviewer wrote, "This is a splendid curriculum.....years ahead of what commercial educational publishers are producing." Also, "the objectives of the Introductory Unit are clear, specific, and age-appropriate and the individual lessons are clearly linked to them." The major source of support for these judgments was the project's inclusion of unfamiliar primary source material from different and relatively unknown cultural and ethnic groups. The reviewers provided few critical comments on the substance of the curriculum and the implications for teaching. In the main, their criticism focused on issues of formatting and editing.

The reviewers' comments are similar to the comments about the curriculum materials that CRE received from the project officials and from a number of local teachers who provided assistance in the past with

the curriculum development process. These different individuals celebrated the social studies units for their adoption of non-standard primary resource material from unfamiliar cultural groups and what they characterized as the general "newness" or the "innovativeness" of this curriculum. For instance, during an interview a project official said that "these materials are better than anything on the market, including college textbooks." One of the reviewers wrote that "not even the best college-level textbooks do a better job at traversing the forest of human experience on clear pathways."

Unfortunately, neither of the reviewers is a middle school social studies teacher. Both have doctorates. As for their occupations, one is a professor of history at a private college and the other is a high school teacher in a suburban school district. One of the reviewers had also served as a consulting scholar for CRHA on this curriculum project. Why did CRHA rely so heavily on Ph.D. specialists for the design, development, and evaluation of a curriculum for middle school teachers and their children? These subjective factors are key to appreciating and understanding the strong criticism from the participating teachers who used the curriculum and who had no vested interest in the project's outcome, except this professional one: that the new materials would prove to be significantly better than what they had been using.

More specifically, in interviews and surveys teacher participants expressed the following concerns about the curriculum:

- "the curriculum has no direct link to my school or my district's social studies curriculum;
- "it is not clear in the objectives, assignments, and assessment instruments how this curriculum is a reflection of either the state frameworks or national standards;
- "some of these readings are well beyond what the children can read;
- "the age-inappropriateness of the curriculum really comes out in the selection of artwork for the students' to study;
- "there is too much repetition in the assignments and assessment instruments;

- "there is no index, so a teacher has to know the whole curriculum by heart to find her way around in it;
- "the text has very poorly reproduced black and white photographs only, no color, which makes it a poor example of innovation when placed next to some of the other materials available to the kids;
- "it's a tome, just like most history textbooks, so I don't see what is so special about this material;
- "there is no assistance with vocabulary, definitions of terms, or remembering important factual information."

CRE's review of the three units revealed that both of the above perspectives have merit. Clearly, the previous evaluators have a point. By including a wide variety of unfamiliar primary sources, "We're Making History" offers elements of cultural and historical significance to all school children and especially those whose relatives or ancestors came to the United States from non-European nations. Aiso, the emphasis on literary and artistic products, including field trips to museums and field study areas, provides a flair that should captivate students more readily than the ordinary textbook and classroom lecture.

However, the teachers have registered some very significant points of criticism. From their perspective, the curriculum materials are not easy to teach from, do not fit well with the social studies curriculum that they are obligated contractually to teach in their school districts, and raise serious questions about appropriateness for use with middle school children on the grounds of propriety and readability. CRE concurs with the teachers' criticism.

Technology

The project attempted to include the use of advanced technology in its curriculum. More specifically, it would create its own Web Page on the World Wide Web to encourage and facilitate non-print communication and research by the participants. The results were mixed. Classrooms usually do not have sufficient hardware to support use of the Internet. Also, most teachers have a substantial need for basic

levels of training in respect to use of advanced technology. The project succeeded in getting its Web Page on the Internet. However, Web server statistics indicate that there was a low level of use across the schools and districts. Also, the CRHA Web Page, while adequate, was not very interactive in regard to curriculum materials or research opportunities. In the main, it supported e-mail messages between participating teachers and students.

Summary of Results

This evaluation of "We're Making History" shows that the project is helping middle school students from the Hartford public school district and surrounding suburban public school districts to study a multi-cultural, hands-on social studies curriculum. In this inter-district venture, a total of 26 teachers and approximately 700 students engaged in partnering activities at their different schools and at a number of museums and field study sites in the greater Hartford area. In preparation for the school and museum visits, teachers engaged in collaborative planning, scheduling, and meetings on authentic assessment.

Everyone agreed that the project's most valuable aspect is creating the opportunity and the challenge for students and teachers from these different communities (urban plus suburban and diverse ethnic groups) to come together for sustained, collaborative school work. The students' visits to their partners' schools and their cooperative visits to various museums and field sites gave everyone a chance to escape from the normal school routines, spend time in alternative educational environments, and rely on each other to complete the project's assignments. The curriculum materials offered both teachers and students a variety of primary source materials from different social and cultural groups, many of which are not included in textbooks for the elementary and middle grades. All of the teachers recognized the great potential for this curriculum design and its materials. Hence, the project was directed toward the two main goals of (1) improving multi-cultural teaching and learning and (2) promoting children's achievement through partnering activities at schools, museums, and field study sites.

However, the project was less successful in the accomplishment of its six objectives. During this 1996-97 implementation phase, the project had hoped to rely on its previously trained, "veteran" teachers, but results show that not enough of these teachers volunteered for the project. Some participating teachers had no prior official preparation and, in order to fill the ranks, some principals eventually required their teachers to participate. Consequently, the starting point for teachers was

uneven, with some teachers reasonably familiar and experienced with the curriculum, others who had never before seen the materials, and some who were "volunteered."

Data indicates that the project's 1996-97 implementation had developed a number of other problems. Teachers found the project's management to be lacking in coordination and timeliness. They also became disappointed with the professional development meetings, citing haphazard organization, late starting time, and generally hectic proceedings as flaws that could have been corrected. A more serious concern of the teachers focused on the curriculum materials. Teachers said that the readings were age-inappropriate on the grounds of high readability level (often too difficult, even for the better students) and occasionally involving sexually explicit content (parents wrote letters into the teachers' personnel files complaining about the curriculum).

The Hartford school district had adopted this curriculum and, thus, it was required material for its 4th, 5th, and 6th grade teachers. However, the suburban school districts had their own social studies curriculum, which was different from "We're Making History." Superintendents, building principals, and teachers at some suburban schools found that the CRHA curriculum presented a significant departure from their curriculum and was not sufficiently based on the State's frameworks and trends in a national core social studies curriculum. Indeed, at the national level, the "revisionist" or "current scholarship" is not the only valid perspective among contemporary history and literary scholars. Also, the "veterans" prior experience with the project led them to conclude that there would be too much work involved in adapting the curriculum for their purposes, the project's management was not prompt or responsive to local needs, and its top leadership did not include middle school teachers.

Teachers reported that the curriculum materials were "unfriendly" to teachers and students. To explain further, there was no index; no scope and sequence; no vocabulary development; insufficient variety of readings, assignments, and exercises; the teacher's edition was written in lengthy, turgid prose; and to use the curriculum properly (as with all

materials for teaching) teachers had to read the entire package, which would require an inordinate amount of time—and they did not have the spare time in their work days. Teachers said that the materials are in this "unfriendly" condition because "CRHA does not know about education, children, and public schools; this curriculum is not written for children." Teachers who used the curriculum indicated that they adapted the content for their classroom and partners and often supplemented it with their own professional collections.

Teachers said that they were frustrated at the end of the year when they found the assessment instruments were inadequate for the task. In many instances they "put pressure on the kids" to get the work done. As a result, much of the students' work shows a remarkably high degree of sameness across classrooms, schools, and districts. A related concern of the teachers was that there was insufficient time for collaborative planning between teachers and what time was available was not used well by the project.

In sum, the central idea of this project—with its emphasis on a hands-on social studies curriculum that cuts across a wide variety of cultures from past and present and that brings together teachers and students from Hartford and surrounding suburban public school districts—is both timely and valued by all participants. However, teachers cited problems with the curriculum materials (for themselves, their students, and their districts) and raised questions about the project's management and overall development. In view of the importance of this project to Connecticut's present challenge to bring city and suburban cultures together for social harmony, education, and mutually beneficial economic productivity, this project deserves a powerful new lease. CRE sincerely hopes that the CSDE will make adequate resources available for continuing the project in a substantially revised format.

Recommendations for Improvement

The following recommendations for improvement are distilled from the data CRE collected in interviews and surveys of participants.

- Change the leadership style from a top-down orientation to an

open, process-oriented approach that involves the contributions of all key players, especially middle school teachers who work in the public schools of Hartford and its nearby suburban public school districts.

- Help school teachers, curriculum directors, administrators, and parents to come together to work out a mutually beneficial and valued social studies curriculum.
- Revise the curriculum to make it "teacher friendly" by offering a variety of readings at different readability levels, a variety of assignments and assessment instruments, age-appropriate on all bases for middle school children, an index and scope and sequence, clear explanation of its fit with the State framework and national direction for social studies education, and more appealing in general format.
- Review contemporary textbooks from a variety of publishers to find the core trade secrets that make educational resources clear, coherent, adaptable, and flexible for use by teachers and students.
- Provide more time for collaborative planning among partnering teachers by organizing grade-level meetings, encouraging voluntary and independent meetings among partners, and increased use of technology for non-print communication (i.e., World Wide Web and e-mail).
- Broaden and deepen the curriculum by including more distinctly different cultural groups of immigrants from all of the continents and give more emphasis to competing historical perspectives, so that children throughout the region will be able to understand and make history that is both true and personal.
- Restore the sense of confidence in and commitment to this inter-district project among school teachers, administrators, and parents in Hartford and the surrounding suburban public school districts.
- Identify and clarify the minimum, specific skills and attitudes that students will develop; create a means for assessing students' progress in these areas.
- Focus on clearly written, achievable, and the most commonly

valued objectives for the next year; by mid-year create a similar plan for coherent, follow-up activity in the next year and subsequent years.

Appendix

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